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Translating Inclusion

Mia Arp Fallov & Rasmus Hoffmann Birk

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explore how practices of translation shape particular paths of inclusion for people living in marginalized residential areas in Denmark. Inclusion, we argue, is not an end-state but rather something that must be constantly performed. Active citizenship, today, is not merely a question of participation but also learning to become active in all spheres of life. The article draws on empirical examples from a multisite fieldwork in six different sites of local community work in Denmark, to demonstrate how different dimensions of translation are involved in shaping active citizenship. We propose the following different dimensions of translation: translating authority, translating language, and translating social problems. The article takes its theoretical point of departure from assemblage urbanism, arguing that cities are heterogeneous assemblages of sociomaterial interactions. Through the practices of translation, local community work both transforms the possibilities for residents and disrupts the compositions of urban assemblages. Through this, we argue, local community work creates new opportunities for residents.

Keywords

assemblage, translation, inclusion, marginality, community work

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to explore how practices of translation play a significant part in how people living in marginalized residential areas learn to navigate legitimate paths to inclusion. Our case for exploring this is local community work in Denmark. Local community work in Denmark is best described as a series of disparate practices that all seek to intervene on marginalized residential areas in Denmark. This type of work focuses on issues such as (re)generating social networks, reducing unemployment, and promoting safety. It is funded partly by the Danish state but carried out by partnerships between local municipalities and housing associations (see Fallov, 2017, Hoffmann Birk, 2017, for more detailed analysis of this). Overall, the primary purpose of local community work can be said to *reintegrate* areas that are demarcated as marginalized “back” into the mainstream of society (Fallov, 2010, Fallov & Nissen 2018). Put differently, practices of local community work function by creating paths of inclusion into modes of (active) citizenship that are considered legitimate by the state, especially employment and education. However, there is relatively little research that focuses on *how* such paths of inclusion are created, and there is little research that qualitatively explores local community work (see Hoffmann Birk, 2017).

As we expand on later in the article, we draw the concept of translation from actor–network theory (Latour, 1999, 2005; Law, 2009) to mean the distortion that happens between two events, for instance (as we will show later), when local community workers act as mediators between residents and the local municipal authorities.

The article is based on a multisite qualitative study of local community work in Denmark, conducted by the authors and one research assistant. Six different local community work projects were chosen, from six different parts of Denmark. The projects all take place in marginalized residential areas; however, their local contexts were slightly different. Two projects took place in or close to the metropolitan area of Copenhagen, while the remaining projects were situated in smaller city areas across Denmark. We chose these projects to mirror the different scales and types of urban environment that Danish local community work inhabits.

The generation of empirical materials took place from December 2014 to 2016. Throughout this period, both authors conducted a combined 359 hours of participant observation of local community work and 35 interviews with local community workers. For instance, we followed local community workers as they held meetings with each other, or with residents, and we followed them in their daily practices of work. While the local contexts differed between projects, some elements were the same, such as the close collaboration between local community projects and the local authorities. Furthermore, the ways in which local community workers attempt to translate inclusion is, we will argue, a general trait for this kind of work. All quotes have been translated into English, and all participants, including locations of the projects, have been anonymized.

In the article, we first delineate our theoretical point of departure. Here, we draw on contemporary urban theory, which emphasizes how cities are complex and heterogeneous assemblages (e.g., Amin & Thrift, 2002; Farias, 2011; Farias & Blok, 2016; McFarlane, 2011a). We especially draw on McFarlane's (2011b) ideas about *urban learning*. We thus show how local community workers and residents engage in practices of translation. Specifically, we show how authority, language, and social problems become translated and how these practices can create pathways to inclusion for marginalized residents.

Translation and Learning to Be Included

The argument pursued in this article draws on work by Fallov (2006, 2010), in which it was shown that to become included citizens, residents of poor and vulnerable neighborhoods have to *learn* to speak the language of regeneration. Citizenship is not a state of being that is achieved once and for all but something that is learned (Mayo, 2004; Fallov, 2006), practiced, and performed in relation to particular scripts (Isin, 2009). Local residents must learn to adhere to the curriculum of capacities that is deemed legitimate and necessary in order to become included. This curriculum of capacities often has a particular spatial dimension—it is active engagement in one's local neighborhood, it is participation in regeneration projects, it is the development of closer relation to one's neighbors (Fortier, 2016). The professionals involved in neighborhood regeneration, especially local community workers, thus have a central role in facilitating and instigating the development of such capacities. This underlines how the process of inclusion is relational and enmeshed in asymmetrical and hierarchical power relations.

Relatively few studies focus on what is actually going on in the practice of local community work (Hoffmann Birk, 2017). Moreover, relatively little is written with a focus on what happens if we investigate inclusion not as an end-state but as a constant state of becoming, something that has to be worked on and practiced individually and collectively. In this article, we see citizenship and inclusion as made up by situated and relational processes that tie the individual to society through different scales and spaces, often through local communities. We do not, then, see inclusion and citizenship as an end-state or as a question of individual fulfilment of potential (see also Taylor, 2000). Central to our analysis in this article is the idea that learning to become included happens through *practices of translation*. We draw here on McFarlane's (2011b) idea that learning takes place within and through the urban context, in our case, through local community projects in marginalized neighborhoods.

McFarlane (2011b) conceptualizes learning (and knowing) as embodied and uncertain processes that unfold and emerge through our engagement with our surroundings. Learning and knowing are not something that emerges from an individualized subject, cut off from the world, but a way of describing how people *come into being* through their engagement with other agencies, human as well as nonhuman (McFarlane, 2011b, p. 2). Thus, when we say that inclusion and active citizenship are something one must *learn*, we do not mean learning as the memorization of information diffused from the knowing professional to the marginalized resident. Instead, we argue that learning is an often unpredictable process of emerging *through* one's environment (Ingold, 2000). Learning, for McFarlane (2011b), is conceived as a "[...] distributed assemblage of people, materials and space that is often neither formal nor simply individual" (p. 3). Thus, learning to be included is a process that emerges as people emerge through particular, fragmented, political, and sociomaterial urban environments, depending greatly on how they engage with and perceive the world (Amin, 2013; McFarlane, 2011b). In our case, learning to become included is thus a process through which local community workers and residents emerge together, a process that depends on the particular neighborhoods, the particular local politics, the local economies, and sociomaterial circumstances. Inclusion, then, emerges through the wider urban assemblage that local community projects and local residents are a part of, rather than on either the residents or the local community workers in isolation. McFarlane points to three different types of interrelated processes or dimensions of this assemblage: translation, coordination, and dwelling. Translation, for Latour (1999), was used to "to mean displacement, drift, invention, mediation, the creation of a link that did not exist before and that to some degree modifies the original two" (p. 179). For McFarlane (2011), translation refers to the distribution of knowledge through multiple space-times (e.g., through documents and archives) and to the understanding that these distributions result in amplifying, distorting, contesting, and repacking. Moreover, McFarlane focuses on the role of intermediaries in translating knowledge between near and far, and how they in the process turn into mediators shaping and distorting what is going on. Processes of translation underpin how knowledge is practice-based and situated and often involve comparisons, sociospatial interactions, and compositions.

In marginalized urban areas in Denmark, local community workers translate between different public authorities and residents. These translations can quite literally be between languages, but commonly they are also acts of mediations between authorities and the needs and problems of local residents. As we will show, the ways in which local community workers translate inclusion, and through this attempt to help local residents *learn* about their urban environments, is a complex affair, involving three different elements of translation. Translation involves translating into the dominant language, for example, of immigration authorities or housing associations, or reversely allowing for multiple voices and languages to be heard and recognized. Therefore, the question of translation becomes a question not simply of transferring

messages from one language to another but also of mediating and resisting relations of power. Local community workers translate modes of dwelling, being and experiencing into activities and interventions by turning social problems into questions of resources, by translating barriers into modes of possible action. In the following sections, we focus on how local community work professionals are central to the processes of translation: how they distribute and amplify knowledge, and how knowledge emerges through the local community work practice. We argue for the following different dimensions of translation: translating authority, translating language, and translating social problems.

In the following sections, we use McFarlane's ideas of urban learning as a point of departure, with special emphasis on translation and how the processes of learning to be included are relational, contextual, and situational. They are enmeshed in hierarchies and relations of power (Bourdieu, 1991, 2005). We will argue that this perspective shows how local community work should be understood as part of sociomaterial assemblages (Fariás & Blok, 2016), emphasizing the close configuration of the relations formed and the local spaces.

Translating Relations of Authority

Working in and with communities and areas that are marginalized, local community workers function, first, as translators between local residents and various kinds of authorities. Local community projects in these areas are run by the local housing associations. As not-for-profit organizations they are not a *direct* part of either the Danish state or the local municipalities, though they collaborate closely. This unique position means that local community workers often oscillate between speaking on behalf of local residents to the authorities and translating intentions of authorities to local residents.

In the following, we will investigate how processes of translation play out in local community work. Local community workers function, first, as translators and mediators between residents and different forms of authorities. Through these processes both residents and local authorities *learn*, and thus these translations are central for developing local neighborhoods. Relations to local authorities are developed through different spatial arrangements and different degrees of formality. Therefore, practices of translating authority involve different kinds of interchange with materiality in the sense of phone calls, meeting rooms, and papers. Through these sociospatial arrangements, the knowledge of residents, and how best to engage with them and involve them in the neighborhood, is spread.

Our first example comes from a neighborhood near Copenhagen, where one local community worker, who we will call Brian, worked closely with the neighborhood youth, especially in terms of helping them find employment and education. In an interview, Brian emphasized how he *translates* between the young people he works with and the local authorities.

Brian: [. . .] people perceive things differently, and the traditional way of teaching others, it doesn't work for everyone [. . .].

Interviewer: No.

Brian: And sometimes [when people try to explain things] I see that the young people don't understand. And Babak [A young local resident, who Brian worked with] is not the first case where I sort of, take them to the side in order for me to translate for them in a way, I know it sounds strange [. . .]. (Interview with Brian)

What Brian describes here is *not* a practice of literally translating between languages (e.g., between Danish and English). Rather, it is a practice of translating *authority*. Brian mediates between the local young people and the municipal authorities, trying to make new connections, trying to make the youths understand what is required of them. Brian further emphasizes the intimate connection between translation and *learning*—he translates so that young people can learn how to properly navigate the paths to inclusion. This is something Brian did in many instances, using his local knowledge of and relations to neighborhood youth at different informal social arrangements to talk to the local authorities (e.g., local politicians or school managers) about the neighborhood youth and what needs doing. He would call the young people he worked with to keep up to speed on their lives, and hold regular meetings with them, helping them navigate the sociomaterial assemblages of the Danish welfare systems. Brian explained how he helped Babak understand the demands placed on him by others:

Interviewer: What is it that is said to Babak that he does not understand?

Brian: It can be, for example, some of the ways he is treated. That is if someone tells him, "You should just call this or that person," and then he has called this person and it has turned out to be about something completely different [. . .] sometimes the young people get some kind of message from the public authorities that they do not understand [. . .] and this is where I sort of create a learning relation to them [. . .] and then the penny drops. (Interview with Brian)

The Danish welfare state has a strong presence in marginalized neighborhoods (which contrasts with, e.g., the United States; Schultz Larsen, 2011; Wacquant, 2008). Rather than being absent, the presence of the welfare state is a condition

for many people, as they live in nonprofit housing, go to public schools, or receive benefits from the welfare state. For the young people Brian works with, navigating the complex sociopolitical system of the welfare state is difficult, and his practice of translation aids them by mediating the feelings of confusion and powerlessness they may experience in their encounters with Danish public authorities of various kinds.

In the following example, local community workers translate between authorities and residents to avoid misunderstandings or dispel myths about both residents and the local municipal authorities. We here quote Hanna, a local community worker who works with newly arrived immigrant and refugee families (she works in a different project than Brian):

In the Kurdish environment, [I have encountered] rumors that the department of families and children are going to forcibly remove children [from their families]. In these cases, I have called the Department, which made me able to tell the families, “You know what, I know them [the Department] really well, and I know that is not what they do, but let’s call them and talk to them” [. . .] this is where I think that if we can help them feel better equipped to engage with the system, which they are bound to meet. (Interview with Hanna)

Here, Hanna translates the narratives rumors that the Kurdish families have produced about local authorities into fact; she acts as a *mediator* as she *changes* the connections between the Kurdish families and the municipal authorities.

These processes of translation and mediation are important because it counteracts what Blokland (2008), drawing on Tilly, has termed *emulation*. Emulation refers to how professionals often carry the mental geographies of neighborhoods—for instance, that an area is a “ghetto” or otherwise problematic—with them across different temporal and spatial settings (for a similar point about reputational geographies of marginalized neighborhoods and how this effect everyday lives, see Clayton, 2009; Parker & Karner, 2010). Emulation, Blokland argues, shapes the expectations, behaviors, and interventions of professionals in relation to residents.

Emulation draws out how the processes of translation are based on storytelling and comparisons, and how such processes are not something that are tied to the individual but become a question of collective narratives and schemas of sense making that shapes collective relations. Moreover, emulation refers to how residents through narratives about the system emulate particular relations to and fear of public authorities and thus emulate particular roles associated with stigma. Thus, stigmatization comes not just from the “outside in” but also from the “inside out” (Blokland, 2008, p. 34). However, the cases of Brian and Hanna show how local community workers can initiate processes of translation that can displace patterns of emulation with new ones and thereby transform relations of authority (Blokland, 2008).

Local community professionals thus translate the relations of authority by distributing knowledge between citizens and local authorities, and through amplifying positive examples they initiate the production of counternarratives. These translations *change* the relations between local authorities and residents, thus changing the political and symbolic capital associated with these authorities (Bourdieu, 1991) by intervening in how such authority is played out in everyday practices. This does not mean that the relation of local community workers can be understood only in opposition to formal authorities. Contrarily, they use their intermediary position to establish new scripts of citizenship (Isin, 2009) by giving meaning to the acts of local residents and translating what is viewed as legitimate from the perspective of the formal public authorities. By bringing together relations and forms of practice across different spaces and settings they influence the cognitive schemas of local authorities as well as citizens. In this way, local community professionals through their practices become mediators opening possibilities of change over the long term. By facilitating the development of capacities to engage with authorities they emphasize the processual and mobile (although slow-moving) character of learning to be included.

Translating Language

Language, understood commonsensically as speaking, reading, and comprehending, also plays an important role within local community work projects. Questions of whether plans and documents should be translated into different languages is naturally a central theme in neighborhoods with multiple ethnic compositions and where Danish is only one among many different spoken languages in everyday life. The practices of translation vary in the different areas in which we have conducted field studies. In some areas, all material produced by the local community secretariat is translated into the main languages of the area, while in other areas there is an insistence on Danish as the only official language. In all areas, though, many different forms of language translation practices are carried out in their daily work. What we want to show here is that much more is going on than translation from one language into another (dominant) language. Processes of translation are enmeshed in and supported by practices of coordination, which bring together knowledge and information from other time-spaces through different forms of materialities and relations.

Our third empirical example comes from counselling sessions within local community work projects. Such sessions are a common initiative in many neighborhoods, often involving volunteers. Within such sessions, residents are guided by local community workers and volunteers on matters relating to their finances and their relations to local and national

authorities. The example below is of such a counselling session. In this example, there are four different actors. The first is Hassan, who is a paid intern within the local community work project. He is of Syrian descent and has a central role as a translator. Second, we have two Danish women, who volunteer as counsellors. Third, there is the resident—a Syrian refugee who has fled to Denmark without his parents.

Hassan leaves the room to retrieve the resident next in line. In comes a young man. Hassan already knows this case and explains how the resident has come on behalf of his little brother, who is 13 years old and lives in a residential institution. The resident has come to get assistance with filling out the application for family reunion in order to get a permit to get their parents to the country. The brothers are here, but their parents are still in Syria. The resident has brought a folder with a lot of papers including copies of the family reunification form "SG1". This form is required to apply for family reunification. The counsellors agree to assist the resident, and they fill out the forms for the parents. They have done this before. The counsellors ask about different forms of information, and the resident shows them copies of the parents' passports, wedding certificate and so on. Hassan translates, and the counsellors fill out the form in Danish [. . .] The counsellors pass the resident's phone between them, as it has a photo of the wedding certificate. The counsellors discuss among themselves what to write in the category of reason for family reunification, and Hassan translates the discussion for the resident. There is a lot of different papers present at different points in time. When the counsellors finish, Hassan takes the form to one of the other local community workers to ensure that they have filled in the categories correctly. The resident smiles, thanks them and says goodbye. (Field notes)

In this case, multiple translations are taking place. Hassan, obviously, translates between Danish and Arabic. The life of the resident and his family translated into Danish and then becomes inscribed into the forms. Through these inscriptions, the life of the resident comes to take on a new form, a new character. These translations, importantly, are performed not only by *words* but also through nonhuman actors (Latour, 2005) such as phones, photocopies of documents, photographs, and official forms. These nonhuman actors serve the crucial role of connection, bringing knowledge of Syrian weddings and naming traditions into this specific interaction. Simultaneously, they extend the relation from the young man to his parents in Syria, and his brother in the orphanage in another part of town. Phones and in other examples laptops make distant actors proximate in the room and function to translate difficult and emotionally charged situations. Although the tone is calm in the whole session, it is clear that there is a lot at stake here. This is a question of the future of this family as a family, and about the responsibilities of the young man for his younger brother, who is in a new country without the support of their parents. Hassan not only translates between Danish and Syrian but also mediates the relation between the young man and the counsellors' supporting relations of trust. In order to perform this role, Hassan brings with him his prior knowledge of the young man, as well as his cultural knowledge allowing him to joke and alleviate the tension that could have emerged between the young man and the female volunteers. Hassan thus occupies a key position, as the relation between the young man and the volunteers depends on the way he relays the knowledge he gains through translating. In another situation in the same counselling session, Hassan uses this position more directly to dismantle the tension between the volunteers and another refugee who had gotten in trouble with some bills he could not pay and who was becoming aggressive.

Through these practices of translation, the session becomes a coordination device (McFarlane, 2011b). The session brings different forms of knowledge together (knowledge of juridical demands, cultural knowledge, and knowledge of the family); in short, it coordinates between the young man and the counsellors. Furthermore, Hassan, the voluntary counsellors, the nonhuman actors all form a practice of translation that becomes an intermediary between the young man and the national authorities allowing him to communicate with them in what is conceived as the legitimate fashion. Such translations are necessary, as national authorities "listen" only if one masters the languages deemed official (Bourdieu, 1991, Fallov, 2006), that is, the language of bureaucracy, paperwork, and forms. In this case, even simple mistakes in the paperwork can make it ineligible, thereby extending the time the young kids must be apart from their parents. In this way, translations of language also intersect with translations of authority—translating the words of the resident into Danish and into the forms is simultaneously a crucial way of mediating the relations between local residents and the Danish welfare state.

Processes of translation do more than establish common understandings between professionals and residents. They become the field from which acts of citizenship (Isin, 2009) and urban learning emerge.

Shindo (2012) has argued that community is not "[. . .] a circle to be completed, but a shared mode of being articulated through translated communication" (p. 151). Following this, we may say that the local community workers in the above examples help articulate and *translate* a shared mode of being. From their translations, relations to education and school authorities as well as national authorities emerge. In the example with Hassan above, the practice of translating language and translating authority is simultaneously an act of citizenship as the young man with the help and care of the local community workers enacts his rights and those of his brothers, and one step on the path to (potential) legitimate citizenship. Hence, we argue that this practice of translation enables particular forms of *inclusion*. They make it possible for local residents in vulnerable positions to enact what is deemed legitimate ways of being, for example, paying their bills or communicating with public authorities. But as we shall see below the practices of local community workers also

function as ways of making the problems and acts of local residents meaningful to public systems, thus enabling new ways of seeing neighborhoods.

Translating Social Problems

So far, we have demonstrated how local community workers, through translating language and translating authority, come to *translate inclusion*. These translations of inclusion are, we argue, examples of urban learning; they are practices through which local community workers and residents come to learn together through the localities in which they dwell.

In the final part of our analysis, we focus on how local community work professionals translate their knowledge of the residents' social problems into new narratives.

In the following example, *neighborhood* or a sense of *locality* is translated and produced to amplify particular views on residents and their problems. This is taken from a third of our cases where the municipality in co-operation with the local community project are trying to produce a new narrative about the neighborhood, which has undergone a series of regeneration efforts.

In the following interview excerpt, Charlotte, the leader of the project, speaks about the importance of using what she calls "neighborhood glasses":

Charlotte: I think that putting the neighborhood glasses on can make a difference.

Interview: Yes. How so?

Charlotte: That is, turning your focus to the local, and the fact that we are in this process of turning the neighborhood around together. Through this, we put the individual into a new context [. . .] How to explain it, you create a new local context, through which [residents] can see [themselves] as a resource [. . .] we say: okay we now have a neighborhood here, we have a regeneration plan, we have a joint focus. How can we see ourselves in this connection and how can we cooperate on something that will benefit exactly this area? I think that this has opened our eyes in new ways in relation to how we can cooperate and use each other.
(Interview with Charlotte)

Having the "neighborhood glasses" on enable local community workers and the residents to see each other in a different light. In the above example, the planners explicitly and actively aim to renarrate neighborhoods to bring about new ways of thinking about the neighborhoods, which are not necessarily determined by planning zones. Neighborhoods come into being, and previous narratives and connections are recontextualized and shifted to be part of this new story of the neighborhood. To work to improve the image of deprived neighborhoods is a well-known strategy in many neighborhoods undergoing local community work interventions (Andersen, 2003). What is interesting in the present context is that by putting on "neighborhood glasses" local community workers attempt to shape the dwelling of the residents—that is, to see themselves in relation to their material surroundings, as part of a collectively produced locality, and through this relation come to see themselves as a resource.

In an open session with professionals in different roles from across the country, the local community workers continued this work, by initiating a kind of role-play connected to a map of the neighborhood placed at the center of the room. The audience could press buttons representing different sites on the map, and at each site the lived experiences and voices of residents were transmitted. For example, a local community worker who herself was a resident of the area, among others, spoke about her process of becoming, as she had gone from being a volunteer to learn to be a paid staff member.

McFarlane (2011b) argues how dwelling becomes dependent on processes of translation and coordination. In the above interview, Charlotte relays how she uses the translation of the neighborhood to coordinate between different ways of engaging with the space and its living practice. The practice coordinates attempts to channel this dwelling into particular forms. Translating the lived experience of residents through "neighborhood glasses" amplifies forms of perception of where they live and enables local community workers to attempt to orchestrate particular relations between habitus and habitat (Fallov, 2006). Our point is not to say that residents are then "produced" in a passive way in this translation process. Rather, the tactics (de Certeau, 1984) of residents influence the direction or optics of the neighborhood glasses, as in the example of the role-play where the voices of residents collectively aim to generate new optics for professionals. This example highlights how the practices of translation is configured together with the materiality of neighborhood and the practices and perception of dwelling. Creating new narratives of the neighborhood can be understood as the process of creating particular backcloths in which the social problems of residents are translated into a new context and in which the scripts of citizenship can be acted out. It becomes a form of generic translation that enable political acts by connecting the fragments of marginalized areas with the rest of the city in new ways (McFarlane, 2018).

Different forms of inscription devices play a part in this translation. Moreover, the neighborhoods and forms of engaging with the neighborhoods likewise play a role in how social problems are viewed, especially how they are imagined transformed. We will illustrate this with a quotation from Lina (who worked in the same project as Brian), who

explains how the most important competence that a local community worker has, in her view, is the ability to piece together what she calls a “holistic picture” of the residents:

Interviewer: What does a holistic picture of the person look like?

Lina: [. . .] that you get to know what the individual has gone through. If they tell you about their life, it is about being able to have all these cards [e.g., knowledge about people] on the hand and then, somehow, use them constructively [. . .] you have to be able to keep a distance from people’s fate, and be able to differentiate between these cards, and these forms of information [. . .] it is about both being able to navigate through what the person in front of you brings with them, and then, in order to help the person develop, piece this puzzle together. [. . .] It’s got to make sense to the person you are sitting across [. . .] It is not enough to look at one card. Because I can sit here and only look at how to get the person into a job as quick as possible, but . . .

Interviewer: But that is not what you do?

Lina: No. (Interview with Lina)

Here, the local community worker translates narratives about the residents’ social problems into a new narrative, by piecing together different forms of knowledge shared by the residents. Thus, practices of translation are situational processes that are dependent on local community workers’ knowledges about the local areas and on residents. This practice is performed in the meeting with the specific residents depending on which “cards” they bring to the table, so to speak. By piecing together different elements of residents’ narratives, the community worker displaces or recontextualizes the narratives into a different context. Moreover, this recontextualization is enabled by the local community worker’s intimate local knowledge and intermediary position between the resident and municipal authorities. The local community worker attempts to make a joint picture that the residents themselves can make sense of, and can then take action on the basis of. In this procedure, individual understandings are brought together and the process of translation merges individual goals with collective goals. Local community workers are themselves influenced by national narratives of which paths to inclusion are more legitimate than others, and it is hard to imagine, even though it is emphasized that it should make sense to the individual, that they do affect the translation process. Collective and national narratives of the good life, for example, the importance of employability, or visions of how to be a good neighbor, or what it means to be active (Jupp, 2017; Newman, 2017), work as a code that shapes the process by delimiting the horizon of possibilities that the local community worker translate in relation to (Fallov, 2006; Bernstein, 1996). Although local and situational, the translation process is shaped by the movement of national policies and how they themselves are translated in local contexts. The process where the local community workers, in dialogue with residents, piece together information, and bring particular ways of seeing the human about, is enmeshed in complex hierarchies, which in nonlinear fashions shape possible narratives.

However, these forms of translating social problems are given shape by measures of audit that the local community workers have to report their “results” in.

[. . .] it can be, for example, a woman provided for by her husband, and she comes in here on the verge of suicide. Then within half a year she has gained a new life, gained well-being, has become able to take of her children, or has come out of [substance abuse] of some kind, and so on. This is something near a miracle for this particular woman, but we can only account for this development by filling out the forms, noting down that she has progressed in terms of everyday coping, which has brought her a little closer to the labour market than previously, and that we have had x number of supervisions, or something like that. (Interview with Liza)

On the one hand, these schemas both support the local community workers by collectivizing local and particular knowledge. On the other, these schemas also actively *shape* knowledge in particular ways, filtering toward particular goals and measurements. In this way, the local community workers and the schemas work as inscription devices (Latour, 1999)—that is, turning qualitative data into something measurable and comparable (see Fallov, 2012; Hoffmann Birk, 2018).

By narrowly defining what “progress” is, such schemas limit the possible ways that the local community worker can translate the development that the woman in the example has experienced. Here the complex issues of well-being have to fit into categories that bring about alignment with developing capacities of employability. Moreover, the schemas enable information to be transported between supervision and conversations between residents and local community workers into other settings. They connect, and are shaped by, the governing rationale that is dominated by employability as the legitimate path to societal inclusion (Fallov, 2011).

Conclusion

In the present article, we have outlined the practices of translation involved in local community work, and how they produce particular understandings of the neighborhood, the residents, and the relations between residents and professionals and different forms of authorities. We have argued that such translation practices are part of how people come to learn to navigate the urban assemblages. We have been informed by the questions of *who* learns *what*—and for which purposes? One answer is that the practices of translation filters knowledge; it distorts narratives of local authorities but also bring about new perceptions individually and collectively. However, where local community workers in some instances manage to change the relations between local authorities, for example, school authorities, and residents, they are also themselves part of a translation practice in which national policies and perceptions of inclusion are filtered on the local level of everyday practice. Translation is a locally situated practice, enmeshed in complex power relations, shaping what and how we know of where we live, who the residents are in neighborhoods, and how we are to think of the problems they must cope with. To translate is to recontextualize. It is a process that displaces knowledge of the near and the local in its interaction with knowledge from other scales and spaces. The practices of translation distort knowledge as much as they enable synergies and new “holistic” approaches.

We have focused on translation not to claim that is a neutral process but to show how producing particular forms of inclusion through local community work is part of urban learning assemblages. Here learning emerges *through* the engagement with the local spaces, and the practices of translation play significant part by mediating in the power relations that characterize such spaces and by assisting the acts of citizenship carried out by residents. Since our examples stem from a Danish context, local community professionals see themselves as integrated in a welfare state context, sometimes mediating the relation to welfare authorities, other times building bridges and creating connections to welfare authorities (Hoffmann Birk, 2017). In other contexts, the dominance of nongovernmental actors shapes the translating process, producing different configurations of translation and therefore different scripts of citizenship, due to the relative absence of welfare authorities. What we want to argue here is that turning our attention to the practices of translation in local community work will highlight the ways paths of inclusion and citizenship come into being through this process.

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